

thought about it today when I was looking at Mr. DeBose up here introducing me, expressing the pride in the service he rendered and how it changed the minds and the hearts of the people with whom and for whom he worked. Dr. King said, "Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless effort and persistent work of dedicated individuals who are willing to be coworkers with God. And without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the primitive forces of stagnation. And so we must help time, and we must realize that the time is always right for one to do right." "Time is neutral," he said. "Time can either be used constructively or destructively." All he asked from each of the rest of us was to put in a tiny, little minute.

So, will we make Martin Luther King glad or sad about the way we use our tiny, little minutes? In any one minute in America today, two aggravated assaults take place, six burglaries occur, three violent crimes are committed, and three times an hour, that violent act is a murder. But think about it. Within the span of the same minute, two men from different worlds, like Arafat and Rabin, can shake hands and set off on a new road to peace. A leader can agree that his country must give up the world's third largest nuclear arsenal. In one minute, people can make an enormous positive difference: they decide to keep a seat on a bus instead of move

to the back; they decide to show up for school instead of be shunted away; they decide to sit at a lunch counter even if they won't get to eat that day; they decide to pursue an education even if they're not sure there's a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow; they work to keep their neighborhoods safe just to create a tiny little park where children can play without fear again; they keep their families together when it's so easy to let them fall apart; and, they work to give a child the sense that he or she is important and loved and worthy, with a future.

When I think about it I'm often sad that Martin Luther King had so few precious minutes on this Earth. Two days ago he would have celebrated his 65th birthday, and the older I get the younger I realize 65 is. [Laughter] But you know, he did a lot with the time he had, and I think we should try to do the same.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:20 p.m. in Cramton Auditorium at Howard University. In his remarks, he referred to Charles DeBose, Jr., national service intern, and university officials Franklyn Jenifer, president, and Joyce Ladner, vice president for academic affairs. The Executive order and memorandum on fair housing are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters on the Los Angeles Earthquake *January 17, 1994*

The President. Good afternoon. As all of you know, this morning at dawn a violent earthquake struck southern California near Los Angeles. Because it occurred in a densely populated area, it was an unusually destructive one. We have all seen today on our own televisions the buildings that have collapsed, the freeways turned into rubble. The power has been cut off and gas mains have exploded and, most tragically, many people have been injured and several lives have already been lost.

Due to the damage caused by the earthquake, I have, by signing the document that I will sign at the end of this statement, declared these areas of California to be a major disaster, there-

by authorizing the expenditures of funds necessary for Federal disaster assistance that is requested by Governor Wilson.

This program will include, among other things, low-interest loans to replace homes and businesses, cash grants where needed, housing assistance, emergency unemployment assistance, and funds to rebuild the highways, the schools, and other infrastructure.

At my direction, the Director of FEMA, James Lee Witt, is now on his way to California, along with Secretary of Transportation Pena and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Cisneros. In addition, I have directed some senior White House staff to the scene as well. Our

hearts and prayers go out to the people of southern California. I spoke early this morning with Mayor Riordan and then with Governor Wilson and wished them well and pledged to them that the United States Government would do all that we possibly can to be helpful. They were obviously appreciative and were glad that James Lee Witt, as well as our Cabinet Secretaries, were on their way to the scene.

The people of southern California have been through a lot recently with the fires. The economy of the State of California has suffered enormous stresses in the last few years, and I think all of us should be very sensitive to what they are going through now. I know the rest of America will offer them their thoughts and their prayers tonight and will support our common efforts to help them to recover from this tragedy and to get on with the business of rebuilding their lives.

The assistance here will be short-term to help people get through the next few days, but there will also be long-term work to be done, and we expect to be involved as full partners in that.

Again, let me say I wish the Mayor, the Governor, the people of California well. We are looking forward to working with them. I have had the opportunity to speak with both Senator Boxer and Senator Feinstein today, and I am confident that everybody is doing everything they can. I am going to be here basically waiting for reports today and tomorrow as we assess what our next steps should be. Let me sign the document for disaster declaration, and then I will answer a few questions.

[At this point, the President signed the declaration.]

Q. Mr. President, when you say that this will be short-term assistance, any idea how much money this is going to cost the Federal Government in the short term as well as in the long term? Will you be going back to Congress seeking emergency assistance?

The President. I don't know. We have got to wait until we get some sense of how much money is involved. The most expensive thing I know about now would obviously be the three freeways. And any of you who have ever—and I guess all of you, certainly with me and probably on your own, have been on those freeways in times of difficult traffic know how pivotal that's going to be to restoring the economic

capacity of the people of southern California. They depend heavily on those freeways; and then with that many, with three of them severely damaged, I would imagine that would be the most urgent and most expensive need that we know about now. Now, of course, there may be other things and I have to get a report. Again, I expect to be getting reports on this all through tomorrow.

Q. Mr. President, are you considering going out there yourself to look at the damage?

The President. Yes. As you know, I went to the flooded areas in the Middle West and I went—I basically like to take a firsthand view of these things, but I don't want to be in the way. When I go, I want to be a constructive presence. And we've got Mr. Witt out there. We've got Secretary Cisneros and Secretary Pena out there. We've got people from my staff out there. I think it's important that I not go out there and get in the way. So, I don't know when it would be appropriate for me to go. I'm going to wait until I get some feedback from the folks on the ground there. They've got enough of a traffic jam with those three interstates messed up as it is.

Q. Mr. President, what went through your mind this morning when you first were told about this earthquake? We understand you called your brother right away.

The President. Well, the first thing, I guess I was a citizen first. The first thing I did was pick up the phone and call my brother, because I knew that he lived very close to the epicenter of the earthquake. And I called him probably at 5:15 a.m. their time, so it was maybe 35 minutes or 40 minutes after the earthquake had occurred. He was fine. He said they'd suffered some significant disruption in movement there in his apartment, but they didn't have any significant loss. So I felt good about that.

And then I tried to get another report, and then I started calling folks in California in a more official capacity. But, of course, like all of you, I was able to watch it all unfold on television. It was really something.

Q. Mr. President, do you anticipate a need to activate Federal troops—

The President. If we need to do it, we can. We are organized to do it. But again, I want to wait until I get a report back from Mr. Witt after he talks to the Mayor and the Governor and others involved out there. We've had a pretty good record of—you know, we've had experi-

ence working with the folks in that area. Ironically, you know, we've got some sites that were made available for emergency aid during the fires that could still be activated rather quickly. I mean, our folks are in place there and the contingencies that they need to think through, I think, have pretty well been thought through.

So, we should be able to give you a much better report tomorrow sometime.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:07 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

**Letter to Federal Emergency Management Agency Director James L. Witt
on Disaster Assistance for California**
January 17, 1994

Dear Mr. Witt:

I have determined that the damage in certain areas of the State of California, resulting from an earthquake and aftershocks on January 17, 1994, and continuing, is of sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant a major disaster declaration under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act ("the Stafford Act"). I, therefore, declare that such a major disaster exists in the State of California.

In order to provide Federal assistance, you are hereby authorized to allocate from funds available for these purposes, such amounts as you find necessary for Federal disaster assistance and administrative expenses.

You are authorized to provide Individual Assistance and Public Assistance in the designated areas. Consistent with the requirement that Federal assistance be supplemental, any Federal funds provided under the Stafford Act for Public Assistance will be limited to 75 percent of the total eligible costs except for direct Federal assistance costs for emergency work authorized at 100 percent Federal funding for the first 72 hours.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON

NOTE: This letter was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary but was not issued as a White House press release.

**Letter on Withdrawal of the Nomination of Admiral Bobby R. Inman
To Be Secretary of Defense**
January 18, 1994

Dear Admiral Inman:

It is with regret that I accept your request that I not submit your nomination as Secretary of Defense. While I understand the personal considerations that have led you to this decision, I am nevertheless saddened that our Nation will be denied your service.

I wish you the very best as you continue to work on your many important endeavors as a private citizen.

Very truly yours,

BILL CLINTON

NOTE: The White House also made available Admiral Inman's letter requesting that his nomination be withdrawn.